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**TDC/EED  
TRADE DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROGRAM  
EXPORT ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT**

**NDG GROUP  
TABLE GRAPE CONSULTING**

**Prepared For:  
USAID/Cairo  
Contract No.263-0226-C-00-3095-00**

**Submitted by:  
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**June-July 1994**

**FINAL REPORT**  
**POST HARVEST OF TABLE GRAPES**

**JUNE 1st TO JULY 15th, 1994**  
**CAIRO - EGYPT**

*PREFACE - INTRODUCTION*

As seen in this report, I'd like to show in brief, the most significant aspects of my assignment during my stay in Egypt. It should be clear that this report is not a repetition of the written reports made during my visit. It is a summary of the conclusions and reports already done. It is reduced to positive and negative points, so that I can state my final recommendations.

It is essential that everyone who has participated in this work should read this final report, because I believe that it is the best way to solve future problems to achieve one day the main objectives to export good quality fruit.

*I SUMMARY OF THE WORK*

When I arrived the NDG group was formed by several producers, of many kinds of table grapes, and different areas of plantation. This group was under the guidance and support of TDC

My first step was to review the fruit and its producers on their farm.

Thanks to these visits I was able to give my opinion about the quality of fruit that each producer had at that moment.

During my visit I gave my opinion on the fruit: what kind of qualities it has to have in order to be exported and also about the requirements of European markets.

As a second step I began teaching in the packing sheds indicating mainly how to get good post harvest fruit. In this step I was able to show quality objectively in order to achieve an acceptable final product for the European Market.

Different situations appeared in both steps which I will detail here below.

The main objective for which my services were hired was to achieve a good quality of table grape for the European Market.

#### i. OBJECTIVES ACCOMPLISHED

- To know the fruit better: it was very important to know the kind of product that we will work with.
- To know the producers better: it was very important too, to know the goal of each producer, and also to know what they thought of NDG.
- To teach quality: I showed the producers and their people (managers, the head of packing, quality department and supervisors) the idea of export quality. I left detailed quality norms about quality control for export. I was able to observe very good progress. Many of them there considered these new concepts different to what they have done till now.
- To teach operative concepts: I was able to point out concepts about importance of the cool chain, packing materials and pre-cooling conditions and storage. I also left detailed norms.

#### ii. NON-FULFILLED OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of my work unfortunately was not fulfilled: to export good quality fruit. The reasons why this was not accomplished are detailed in next pages.
- To convince producers that my objective was to achieve a good final result looking always at the long term point of view was difficult. It should be noted that in this sense I found different attitudes among the producers as to my work. In this report, I will indicate a classification of producers according to this point.

## *II WORK PROBLEMS*

The main reasons why objectives were not achieved are due to a series of obstacles that occurred during this period.

## i. CONSTANT CHANGE

- Packing was done in an NDG box without being sufficiently prepared to do this job. Teaching requires time and training. Even though many times there was very good fruit that potentially could deliver an excellent final product for export, it requires a series of post-harvest steps (packing, cooling chain, materials) in order for the results to be successful. Apparently there was pressure to export which conspired against the necessary time to produce good table grapes.

- Some packing and storage centers were identified to where staff were trained to achieve good results. When the time came to begin there weren't fruit in some of these centers and producers didn't take their fruit to those there. The defined centers needed minimum conditions of hygiene and operation (that is to say, gas chambers with SO<sub>2</sub>) to obtain good grape. In many packing centers which I did not approved and where packing was finally done these minimum conditions were missing.

- In the middle of my teaching work one of the producers who has a packing and storage center left NDG and that meant that I could not go anymore visiting that center, so my job was interrupted. Therefore there were problems with the people that form part of NDG that prevented achieving better results.

## ii. MINIMUM CONDITIONS

Apart from my constant work in teaching how to obtain good quality, it is necessary to have minimum operational conditions to obtain this result. Several of those conditions weren't achieved and the only way to obtain this result is to do serious work of pre-season planning.

One of the minimum conditions that wasn't achieved was a good carton/box, which is essential in order to sell the product. Another lack of minimum condition was the requirement for harvesting and packing in a way that would avoid the dehydration that occurs to grapes in the desert zone. In my visits and norms there are these requirements to avoid or reduce that problem.

## iii. PRESENT SITUATION

Many members of the NDG are now exporting on their own with a very poor quality grape and with serious problems. There is a good market demand for grapes in Spring and early Summer. The problem is when will fruits appear from Spain and other European countries. In addition, in the future when Greece, Israel and India begin increasing their volumes, the market will demand only the best quality fruit and it is important that Egypt develops a good quality image.

For me, it was very difficult to make many producers understand this concept, because they look for short term results, and my job was focused on the long term that is good quality image in Europe.

### *III PRODUCERS EVALUATION*

Above all it should be emphasized that almost all producers had a positive attitude in listening to my advice, but the difference, from my point of view is how that advice was used and the interest of each producer in changing their bad practices.

Here below, I'll mention those producers who showed interest with a short comment on each.

**- Ayman Korra:**

He is a producer with a lot of interest in doing things well. He provided many comments and that made each visit to his farm useful.

The people working with Ayman also have a good level of interest and the capacity in understanding problems and trying to solve them.

**- Hamed El Shiaty:**

He has improved his production practices and he has good staff who attend to the detail of what has to be done.

**- Tarek Nadim:**

He is a producer that has shown high level of interest and is open to learn. He has an excellent packing house with some details that need to be improved in order to make big volume shipments by sea. He has also people with an open mind who are capable of good post-harvest work. —

**- Husein El Aguizy:**

He is very interested in making changes in practices but economic issues are affecting his results (for example, the high cost of cooling prevented him from having the most favorable temperature in the storage chambers).

He has people very interested in learning and with a mentality to improve themselves. He has the best packing operation in the group.

**- Ashraf El Oseily:**

He is very interested in making changes and improving but unfortunately I couldn't work much with him due to his late production.

**- Sherif El Beltagy:**

He is also interested in improving but more interested in Belco's exports than those of the NDG group.

**- Hegazy Brothers:**

I think they are producers who do things well, they are ready to listen but are slow to react to problems.

**With the remaining producers of the group**, like Zawbaa, Nabil Eyssa, Hanny El Kholaly, that had different production problems, I couldn't work with them, so I can't give an opinion about them.

*IV PROPOSED SOLUTIONS*

The following requirements are needed to obtain good results:

- NDG must have an organizational structure with clear management. The management should set operational and quality norms, as well as, making decisions about which fruit should be exported under NDG label.
- Priority should be given to the quality of fruit rather than the selling effort. Good fruit will always sell.
- Good planning should be done for production and post-harvest and preparation done at least with six months in advance, in regard to materials, harvest flow, quality control equipment, etc.
- It is necessary to clarify well the goals of each NDG member and how they may integrate to form a good export group.
- A new box should be designed with NDG's own label.
- Before the season producers should be given the minimum conditions for export with NDG (i.e. operative conditions, costs, etc.).
- More effort should be made to insure that the advice of consultants is put into practice.

- The NDG group needs strong commercial support from fruit buyers.
- Producers need to be convinced that it is necessary to invest in order to achieve good results. **This investment should be oriented to:**
  - a. Good packing materials.
  - b. Good packing conditions; pre-cooling, storage and transportation.
  - c. Training of people (packing managers, quality control heads, supervisors, etc.).
  - d. Introduction of an incentive system for manual labor to encourage and increase their production and the quality of the fruit.

*FINAL COMMENT*

I foresee a great potential for Egyptian grapes and that good quality exports can be obtained.

This depends only on the producer's decision to take advantage of the opportunity.

It should be remembered that there are people who do not belong to the NDG group who could equally be assisted and become successful.

Export Enterprise Development Project  
Contract No. 263-0226-C-00-3095-00

**SCOPE OF WORK**

**Grape Post-Harvest Specialist (Short-Term)**

**A. BACKGROUND:**

USAID/Egypt has funded the Export Enterprise Development (EED) project with the stated goal to "promote Egypt's economic growth through expanded foreign exchange earnings," and with the purpose to "increase non-traditional exports produced by Egypt's private sector." In the document prepared by Chemonics International for USAID/Egypt, titled Strategy and First Annual Work Plan, "grapes for export" are targeted as one of the priority crops for immediate attention given the assumptions that a market already exists for this product, that Egyptian growers have production experience, and that there is potential for high impact in a short period of time.

**B. STATEMENT OF WORK:**

This short-term assignment is designed to assist the ten grape producers in the "New Desert Growers Group" with improving postharvest handling methods and infrastructure.

**C. SPECIFIC DUTIES:**

1. Advise and assist with the setup of packhouses appropriate for grape packing.
2. Advise and demonstrate proper methods of field packing and pre-cooling.
3. Recommend improvements in sorting, grading, quality control, and packaging of product.
4. Counsel growers on most practical means of cold storage and air and sea transportation, with an emphasis on proper handling of grapes during this process to minimize damage and defects.

**D. PLACE OF WORK**

Based in Cairo, with routine, daily field travel to the grape production areas.

**E. DURATION OF ASSIGNMENT**

Six person-weeks, to begin on or about June 1 and be completed on or about July 15. A six-day work week, Saturday to Thursday, is authorized.

## F. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The consultants will report directly to and coordinate with the chief of party/management advisor for EED, John R. Miller.

## G. PROPOSED CANDIDATE

Joaquin Larrondo has the appropriate experience and background with postharvest handling of grapes for export. He is currently the Chief of Operations for Zeus, a large Chilean exporter of horticultural products, including grapes. Previously, he was the Chief of Exports for the Sociedad Agricola de Santa Elena, a large grape and stone fruit farm, and was responsible for all postharvest operations, including packing, packaging, grading, pre-cooling, cold-storage, and transportation.

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